

# The Joys and Challenges of Teaching Outside Your Comfort Zone

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By the end of today's luncheon...

What's it like to teach outside your comfort zone?

What does the research say?

How can you make it work?

## “Teaching outside your comfort zone”

- New material
- Relearning legacy material that's not your specialty
- Theory | Methods | Applications
- “Content novice”

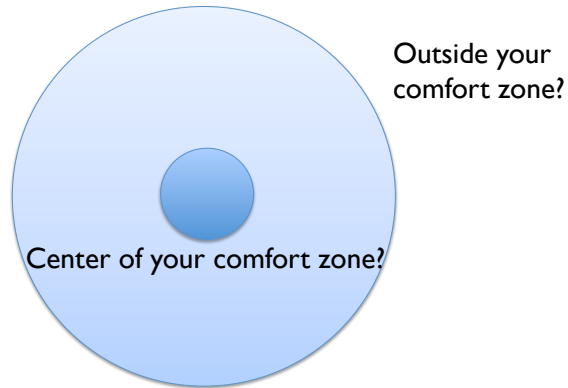
(HUSTON, 2012)

## Why?

- Broad discipline
- Small department
- Introductory courses
- General education courses
- Budget
- Changing discipline
- Keep your job / “why I was hired”
- Prevent boredom
- Topic you want to learn

(HUSTON, 2012; ZAKRAJSEK, 2004 )

**Think** of two topics (or courses)  
you've taught



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## Describe

In pairs

Your two experiences  
(2 min per person)

Given your experience...

- What are disadvantages of teaching outside your comfort zone?
- Advantages?

## How do content novices teach?

### Good News

More accurate estimates:

- time on task
- task difficulty
- first-timer's mistakes

Offer more concrete explanations

Use student-friendly examples

### Bad News

Use fewer abstract concepts

- Makes it harder to transfer ideas to new problems

(HINDS, 1999; HINDS, PATTERSON, PFEFFER, 2001; LOEWENSTEIN, MOORE, & WEBER, 2006)

## Strategies

1. Take control of the choices you can
2. Tell someone you're still learning
3. Talk with a content expert
4. Focus on student misconceptions

(DESROCHERS, 2010; HUSTON, 2012; SADLER ET AL. 2013)

## Common Sources of Anxiety

Workload & time management

Handling questions in class

Credibility

## Workload & Time Management

Three questions

- Focuses your class prep
- “By the end of today’s class...”

Strategies you use?

## Teaching on the edge of your expertise is:

- hard
- more common than we think
- more manageable and effective if you approach it right
- something we can talk about

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